

## ALDEN HOUSE

# Theater, historic house play on connection

With 'The Crucible,'  
Bay Players highlight  
role of Alden House  
in 1692 witch trials

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**D**UXBURY — Two cultural groups in Duxbury are counting on the Alden family's connection to the Salem witch trials to boost their attendance this month.

When the Bay Players present "The Crucible," Arthur Miller's Tony award-winning play about the 1692 Salem witch trials and a thinly veiled parallel to the hysteria of the McCarthy era, the theater lobby will highlight the role that John Alden's house played in America's 17th-century witch hunt.

"It's a fabulous story," said Elin Hagney, director of the John Alden House and a board member of the community theater group.

John Alden's son John (unofficially referred to as "John Jr." by Hagney to distinguish him from his father, the Mayflower passenger), was accused of being a witch while living in Boston. He was also accused in Salem by the same young women featured in Miller's play. Soon after John Jr. was convicted and sentenced to hang, his brothers and other members of the Alden family in Duxbury broke him out of jail and hid him in the Duxbury home. His wife and children were

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Ann Hogan and Jeff Gill portray Elizabeth and John Proctor in Arthur Miller's "The Crucible," presented by the Bay Players. Emma Stanton, 11, sits in a tree on the grounds of the John Alden House in Duxbury as the site's director, Elin Hagney (right) looks on.

GLOBE STAFF PHOTO / BARRY CHEN

# Role of historic house highlighted

## ■ PLAY

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sent to live with relatives in Bridgewater.

After Alden spent three years in hiding, his accuser in Boston recanted, and John Jr. was allowed to return to Boston. Because his property had been divided up and parceled out, he was left with nothing.

"The Alden family at the house [in Duxbury] took a chance," Hagney said. "If it had been found out they were hiding their older brother, they would have been tried for treason because they were harboring a witch."

Last March when the Bay Players decided to produce "The Crucible," Hagney suggested they work with the John Alden House to play up the Duxbury angle of the witch trials.

"It was a natural connection," and one that would draw attention to the work of both groups, she said. "The Alden House has a history of working with the Bay Players. Last year [the John Alden House] gave them rehearsal space in the meeting hall before it collapsed. . . . In return they gave us a full-page ad in their program. We also cosponsored a float in Duxbury's July 4th parade, and the Bay Players performed at our autumn festival."

The two groups also are sharing the same costume designer. Ricki Bowser of Pembroke, the Bay Players' longtime costumer for historical plays, created historically accurate costumes for the Alden House tour group last fall. The costumes represent four centuries of Alden House residents — 1627, 1727, 1827 and 1927. Bowser used the research for the 17th-century Alden House costumes as a guide for the costumes she is

## FYI

"The Crucible" by Arthur Miller will be presented by the Bay Players June 21-22 and 28-29 at 8 p.m. at Duxbury High School Auditorium, Saint George Street, Duxbury. Tickets are \$12, students and senior citizens \$10. Tickets available at the John Alden House. For more information and reservations, call (617) 582-1898.

The John Alden House is on Alden Street, Duxbury. Themed tours are conducted by costumed interpreters. Hours: through June 22, Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; from June 23 to Labor Day, Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; after Labor Day until Oct. 19, Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission \$2.50, children \$1. For more information, or to make special arrangements for tours, call (617) 934-9092.

creating for the Bay Players' production of "The Crucible."

The theater group also is using the house museum as the backdrop for its publicity photographs.

Last year when 20th Century Fox was scouting locations for its upcoming film, "The Crucible" (featuring Winona Ryder), they came to the John Alden House and considered shooting the movie there, Hagney said. "But the windows had been changed in the 1700s and were larger [than the Salem witch trial period], and no way could they mask that," she said. For still photographs of the local community theater group, however, the setting was perfect.

The two local groups also are working together on admission incentives. The Alden House is selling tickets to the play, and the play's program will include discount coupons to the house museum.

One person who likes the idea of drawing a historical connection between the play and the South Shore

is Ron Goodman of Quincy, a literature teacher at Quincy College. In the local production of "The Crucible," he plays Putnam, an outspoken, wealthy landowner who believes witches exist and should be punished.

"I think anyone on the South Shore will get a sense of the tenor of the times" from this production, said Goodman, who has a master's degree in American studies. "This is our history of the South Shore and the North Shore. . . . Nothing is changed [in the script], and the direction is as accurate to the period as possible. . . . It's not modernized at all."

"I read Miller's notes. He tried to make the play as historically accurate as he could, and I think the director [Peter Kates of Norwell] is trying to do that, too," Goodman said. "Miller did research and really knew who these characters were and based the play on real people. . . . I think it will be very relevant to people who do understand history."